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IMPROVEMENT PLAN OF CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT FOR  
MEDIAKANAVA

Bachelor's Thesis 2012

## ABSTRACT

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Improvement plan of customer relationship  
management for Mediakanava

Bachelor's Thesis

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This thesis deals with customer relationship management (CRM). It has become one of the key factors when companies are trying to get better understanding of their customers and to develop relationships with their customers.

The thesis is executed as an assignment for Mediakanava Ky which is a Finnish company based in Tampere. The objective was to create better understanding on how to develop customer relationships, through the use of customer relationship management. The idea for the topic came from the owner of Mediakanava. According to him, the biggest challenge when running a business is to attract customers and to keep them as loyal customers for a longer period of time.

The data is collected from an interview with the owner of Mediakanava and from a customer survey. The interview was done with phone and the call was recorded. The survey was made with ZEF which is an internet based survey tool.

The research findings reveal that customer relationship management is an essential part of company operations. Even a small company should invest in CRM on some degree to get a better understanding of their customers.

## TIIVISTELMÄ

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Tämä tutkimus- ja kehitystyö käsittelee asiakassuhteiden johtamista (CRM). Siitä on tullut yksi tärkeistä asioista, kun yritykset yrittävät lisätä ymmärrystään asiakkaista ja kehittää suhteitaan asiakkaihinsa.

Tutkimus- ja kehitystyö tehdään Mediakanavan toimeksiannosta, Mediakanava on suomalainen yritys. Tehtävänä on selvittää kuinka asiakassuhteita voitaisiin kehittää asiakassuhteiden johtamisen avulla. Idea työhön tuli Mediakanavan omistajalta. Hänen mukaansa suurin haaste yrityksen pyörittämisessä on asiakkaiden pitäminen uskollisina pitkän ajanjakson aikana.

Tieto on kerätty Mediakanavan omistajan haastattelusta ja asiakaskyselystä. Haastattelu tehtiin puhelimesta ja puhelu nauhoitettiin. Kysely tehtiin ZEF:illä, joka on Internet-pohjainen kyselytyökalu.

Tutkimus osoittaa, että asiakassuhteiden johtaminen on tärkeä osa yrityksen toimintaa. Pienenkin yrityksen kannattaisi investoida asiakassuhteiden johtamiseen, jotta he saisivat paremman ymmärryksen asiakkaistaan.

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

This thesis is about customer relationships and how to get more out of them. It is done for a small company and one of the most important things for them is customer relationships. The company operates in the field of event advertising and they have mainly b-to-b customers. Chosen topic to write about is customer relationship management. CRM has become one the key elements, when running a successful business. Modern companies cannot operate effectively without paying attention in some degree to CRM.

CRM gives guidelines for companies on how to manage their customer relationships in the most effective way. Companies have to understand the importance of their customers while operating. Customers want better products, services and better value for their money. This fact puts enormous pressure for companies to develop their products and services to meet up with the demand coming from the customers. Competition between companies is fierce and acquiring customers is a long and difficult process. To make this process easier, it is beneficial to use CRM as a tool. Often it is not even necessary to be looking for new customers but instead focus should be on getting the most out of existing customer relationships.

CRM helps companies to understand their customers and how to make them stay as loyal customers for the company. It also helps companies to realise how to create those long lasting relationships. For a company it is crucial to understand which relationships are desirable and which are not, CRM also helps in this. There are different ways to evaluate customer relationships. Those will be explained in this study.

In order to understand customers in the field of business which a company operates, it is important to understand what the customers are expecting. There are different ways to get this information and one the best ones is to conduct customer surveys. From these surveys it is easy to see what things are important for the customers from their perspective. It is sometimes difficult to see things as the other party sees them. This is why customer surveys are

great. Surveys also give the company an idea how they are dealing with the customers at present moment. Sometimes customer relationships are taken for granted and not enough effort is put into to maintain these relationships. Once you lose a customer, it is hard if not possible to get that customer back.

In this study the focus is on CRM and how to use it to maintain and develop already existing customer relationships. The topic was decided with the owner of the company this study is done for. After few discussions the topic for this study was chosen. The company, that this study conducted by is called Mediakanava.

## 1.1 Company presentation

Mediakanava Ky is located in Tampere and it has been operating for more than 30 years. The company is a two man company and it is owned by Hannu Hynynen.

Mediakanava operates in the field of event advertising. Their main focus is on sporting events and exhibitions. Most of their customers are b-to-b customers and this is why the focus of this study is on these kinds of customer relationships as well. Mediakanavas' b-to-b customers want to have visibility on TV and for the public in different kinds of events. This is the core of the business for Mediakanava, they help companies to have their name to be seen by the public in different types of events through advertising.

Mediakanava manufactures fascias, which are placed on the sides of the playing field for example in sporting events. They also transport, place and store these fascias. Mediakanava also does entrance tickets, visibility reports, VIP-cards, sound advertising and playbill advertising. They also arrange VIP-events and event promotions.

Mediakanava does co-operation with YLE which is Finnish TV-network. YLE decides how much of advertising can be visible in different events.



Mediakanava sells this space to other companies, manufactures the fascias and places them.

## 1.2 Research objectives

The purpose of this study is to make sure that Mediakanava is dealing with customers in the best way possible. In a business field where competition for customers is fierce, it is important to use the best methods available to keep customers satisfied and to make them stay with Mediakanava. This study provides information about CRM and how it can be used as an effective tool to help keeping the customers to be satisfied and being loyal the company.

This study tries to answer to this main research question:

- How to develop Mediakanava's way to deal with their customers?

The main idea for this thesis came from Mediakanava. The goal is to come up with actual CRM improvement ideas.

## 1.3 Research limitations

The company this report is done is small so there is a limited will try my best to get as much information as possible in form of a customer survey. This way more general information can be achieved about what is important in lucrative customer relationships from the customer's perspective.

Books and articles are used as the sources of information. Many of these sources have been used in number of other similar reports, so one difficulty is to make a report that has a significant novelty factor, CRM is a well-known field.

## 1.4 Research methods

The owner of Mediakanava will be interviewed to get an understanding on the level customer relationship management at the present moment. Also to get a

better understanding on how the company is dealing with their customers in general. Interview is the best way to get all of the required information at the same time. This is the reason why it was chosen as a way to do research.

The collection of data is made by sending a customer survey link via email to 20 customers of Mediakanava. Using email is the best way to reach all of the customers with the least amount of effort. Mediakanava wants to protect the privacy of their customers so direct contact information is not given. The emails are sent by Hannu Hynynen who is the owner of Mediakanava.

### 1.5 Structure of the study

An introduction of the study and a short presentation of the company are done first. After that research limitations and objectives are explained. Also research methods used in this study are listed.

In the theoretical part some of the basic theories are explained. First the focus is on customer relationships. The creation of customer relationships is explained, the focus is on b-to-b relationships because Mediakanava does business with other companies. And then different customer groups are introduced. After that customer segmentation and different ways to conduct customer segmentation are introduced. What the customers are expecting and the level of customer satisfaction is explained in detail. Also customer repurchases are explained.

Customer relationship management is explained in detail. The definitions of CRM are introduced and some of the main differences between different sources are compared. Importance of CRM is examined from the different perspectives. Different aspects of integration of CRM are introduced and strategic approach for CRM. Data collection and data mining are introduced as methods to deepen the relationships with customers.

Theoretical framework gives an idea why this report was conducted and the explanations behind the selection of different theories.

Next two chapters introduce information gathered from the company and customers is presented and analyzed. Some tables are made using the information from the customer survey.

Conclusions and results of the study are presented to make a closure. Summary of major results are gathered to make managerial recommendations. The whole study is evaluated from the writers' perspective. Also the need for further research and development is examined.

## 2 CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIPS

Customer relationships are the key element of any business operation. Customers bring in profit for the company, so they should be handled with care and respect. Customers that are satisfied keep coming back, forming long-term relationships with the company. In many cases long-term relationships are beneficial for both parties.

From the company's perspective long-term relationships save resources because they don't necessarily have to seek for new customers. This saves money and time. Marketing to attract customers takes a lot of investments, time and money. (Swift 2001, 3.)

From the customers' perspective long-term relationships are convenient and less expensive. Long-term relationships are usually customized for the benefit of the customer. Terms are always the same when dealing with familiar company and the company usually knows what the customer is looking for. The customer gets a sense of security when dealing with the same company. (Swift 2001, 3.)

### 2.1 Defining a customer relationship

Customer relationships are mutual deals, both parties have to participate in it and both parties have to aware that the relationship exists. Another defining factor is that customer relationships are interactive. Both parties are

interacting and exchanging information. Exchanged information builds the relationship. Information is being exchanged not only post and past purchase conversations between the company and the customer, but also when the customer buys a product or service from the company. (Peppers & Rodgers 2004, 19.)

According to Peppers and Rodgers (2004) the third characteristic of a customer relationship is the iterative nature of it. It means that the interaction between the company and the customer has a context. All of the interactions have a meaning. This context of the interactions builds up over the years and the future interactions are greater and greater in efficiency. In other words the relationship deepens over the years because the information shared makes the transactions easier. This creates convenience for the company but mainly for the customer. It is easier to continue the relationship because at least the basic information already exists. Customer loyalty is also increased because as the context of the relationships gets richer, the harder it is for the customer to start from the start with another company. (Peppers & Rodgers 2004, 21.)

Customer relationship has an ongoing benefit for both parties. From the customers' perspective the most important benefit is the convenience. All relationships require costs in money, time and effort. No customer will participate in a relationship which cannot offset these costs. As time passes the incentive to recover from mistakes gets higher because the context of the relationship grows. (Peppers & Rodgers 2004, 21.)

One key factor in a customer relationship is changes in behavior. Especially companies need to tailor their input according the messages they get from their customers. Making sure that the customer has ongoing benefits from the relationship is the responsibility of the company. By doing this the company makes sure that the customer stays. (Peppers & Rodgers 2004, 21.)

It can be said that the most important factor in a customer relationship is trust coming from both parties. Trust creates a feeling that the company is acting to make sure that the customers' interests are met. Trust is more important for

the customer and it is one the deciding factors whether the customer keeps coming back or not. Affection, satisfaction and trust are the emotional elements of the relationship.

## 2.2 Customer groups

There are many different customer groups. Customers can be either external or internal. This meaning that the customers come from outside or inside the company. Usually companies deal with external customers. According to Swift (2001) customers can be divided in to four different groups;

- Consumer
- Business to Business
- Channel/ Distribution/ Franchise
- Internal customer

Consumer is a private person who buys a product or service from the company. Consumer-to-business type of relationship is the most common type of relationship. In b-to-b relationship companies are doing business with each other. Channel, distribution and franchise are ways to sell or represent products or services of another company. Internal customer comes from within the organization and uses products or services to help organisational operations. (Swift 2001, 4.)

For the company it is important to understand which groups they are dealing with. When there is a clear understanding of different customer groups, right kind of marketing efforts are easier to conduct. Mediakanava deals mainly with b-to-b customers. Evolvment of B-to-B relationships is explained next in detail in this chapter. (Swift 2001, 4.)

## 2.3 Evolvment of a b-to-b relationship

The company should have an understanding on how the relationships develop over time. This understanding teaches the company on how to improve and

maximize the benefits of the relationships they have with their customers. According to Peppers and Rodgers (2004) b-to-b relationships evolve through five steps.

First step is awareness. The company is visible for a possible customer in the market place. In this phase there is not actual contact between the companies. The company's marketing efforts are put on to a test at this point because making the company visible in market place is the key element of a marketing plan. (Peppers & Rodgers 2004, 41.)

Second step is exploration. In this phase the company and the customer are testing different features of the relationship. It is sort of a trial-period when mutual goals, integrity and the capabilities of the other party are examined. There is communication between the parties. The main focus is on the wants of both parties. Also priorities and issues concerning the possible relationship are shared. In this phase it is important to be willing to negotiate and find an agreement of mutual values. If there is unwillingness to negotiate it might lead to termination of the relationship. Both parties have to commit to the relationship to achieve joint goals and to use the power they have fairly. Even this step is truly an important one, it is also a fragile one. Early relationships are terminated in this phase quite commonly because mutual direction and terms are not found. (Peppers & Rodgers 2004, 41.)

Expansion is the third phase. In this phase the actual relationship is already formed and it is proving to be a beneficial one for both parties. The benefits of the relationship are getting bigger. Both parties are depending more on each other's and are taking more risks to expand the relationship. In this phase perceptions made in the exploration phase are reassured. So it is important to really commit to the relationship. (Peppers & Rodgers 2004, 41.)

The fourth phase is commitment. In this phase both parties have already reached the level of value they want from the relationship and also the levels of satisfaction are high. There is full commitment and the need to find alternative relationship is significantly lower. According to Peppers and

Rodgers (2004, 41) there are three measurable criteria to point out the level commitment.

- Inputs. Both parties are providing high levels of inputs to the relationship.
- Consistency. The qualities of the inputs are reliable which allows making of predictions on the development of the relationship in the future.
- Durability. Benefits coming from exchange are easy to identify and this trend is expected to continue in the future exchanges. (Peppers & Rodgers, 41).

The fifth phase is dissolution. The relationship can be disengaged during all of all of these phases. Relationship is hard to build but the dissolution is easy. The main reason for dissolutions is that the value of the relationship decreases. Costs of continuing are greater than the benefits coming from the relationship. (Peppers & Rodgers 2004, 41.)

## 2.4 Customer segments

For a successful CRM project it is important that the customers are segmented into groups, which are then managed as separate units. Through CRM companies collect lots of information from their customers and decisions how to use that information are keys to a successful customer strategy. Segmentation helps the company to decide which groups are valuable to them. Marketing is hard if targeted audience is too big, so customer segmentation has a significant role. It is neither beneficial nor profitable to try to market to all potential customers with one single effort. (Rope 2005, 159.)

Segmenting the customers can be done by basing for example on the age, gender or spending habits of the customer. One key thing for successful customer segmentation is to make sure that the customers in that a specific segment has similarities in more than just one aspect. This way right type of marketing efforts can be planned and carried out. To help customer

segmentation a customer portfolio can be created. It helps to collect mutual exclusive customer groups that comprise a company's entire customer base. (Buttle 2009, 125.)

B-to-b customer segmentation is different and should be separated from normal consumer segmentation. In b-to-b markets there are less possible customers available and the relationships between companies are closer. There are different criteria for segments in b-to-b business environment. Branch, location and amount of facilities, number personnel and revenue are demographic criteria. A second criterion is lifestyle criterion which includes company values, corporate culture, decision-making process, the needs and values of the decision makers. Third criteria are customer relationship factors which are customer profitability, volume and density of purchases, loyalty and customer satisfaction. (Bergström & Leppänen 2009, 154.)

Customer segmentation should be separated from market segmentation. Market segmentation divides the markets into groups, which include potential markets and customers. Marketing segmentation is done to help the company's marketing efforts. Customer segmentation focuses on already existing customers. This is why customer segmentation is closely tied with CRM. Information systems provide information needed in customer segmentation. (Bergström & Leppänen 2009, 150-151.)

Segmenting the existing customers into groups helps the company to manage their customers better. Customers have different kinds of expectations, needs and preferences so managing all of them in one way is not a vice business decision. Segmentation gives the company guidelines on what offer to a specific customer group. This creates value to the company through effective marketing efforts. According to Bergström & Leppänen (2009) if the customers are not segmented at all, the company assumes that all of the customers have similar needs and expectations. In this case the marketing is done it one single effort to all of the potential customers. It is easy to understand that this kind of effort does not give the best end result because customers are different and they expectations vary. (Bergström & Leppänen 2009, 158.)



Customer segmentation is done for many different reasons and it depends on the company, which are the goals they want to achieve with the help of segmentation. One of the most common goals is to improve marketing communications. It helps when there is an understanding about the needs and expectations of different customer groups. Segmentation can be done also to develop products and services to fit certain customer groups, this helps to achieve better customer satisfaction and loyalty.

#### 2.4.1 Selection of customer segmentation criteria

First step is to choose segmentation criteria. According to Ala-Mutka and Talvela (2004) this can be done dividing the criteria into four different classes.

- Basic information. Gender, age, income, education and geographical location.
- Buying behavior. Motives for buying, brand loyalty, use of the product/service and purchasing method.
- Situational variables. Attainability of the order and the size of the order.
- Personal variables. Buyer motivation, risk-taking and personal values.

From these criteria the company chooses the ones that are important for them and in line with the company's strategic objectives. (Ala-Mutka & Talvela 2004, 55-57.)

According to Mäntyneva (2001) another way to segment customers is according to their profitability from the company's perspective. Profitable customers are more important than less profitable so this type segmentation can be useful for the company. Less profitable relationships might get more profitable in the future. Many times, however this is not the case so customer relationship termination might be the best solution. Or another way is to try finding ways to improve these relationships and make them more profitable. Profitable relationships should be developed. Time and money should be invested to maximize the value of these relationships. (Mäntyneva 2001, 27-29.)

One way to choose segmentation criteria is through identification of customer relationship levels. According to Lecklin (2006) there are five different customer relationship levels. These are;

- Key customers
- Regular customers
- Casual customers
- Potential customers
- Former customers

Key customers are the most important ones for the company because they keep coming back and making repurchases. Usually key customers are also the biggest customers in size. Lot of resources should be invested in keeping the key customers satisfied. If the company loses even of one their key customers, it can lead to significant losses in revenue. Key customers should get something extra for their commitment to the company. For example offering them extra services or discounts are good ways to make sure that the key customers are satisfied. (Lecklin 2006, 96-97.)

Regular customers keep coming regularly but they buy only small amounts of products or services. The company should not invest a lot of resources into these types of relationships so that relationships they have are profitable as possible. Same can be said about casual customers. They keep buying the company's products or services but they are not loyal. With right types of marketing efforts casual customers might be transformed into regular or even key customers. (Lecklin 2006, 96-97.)

Potential customers are in the same markets with the company but they keep buying products or services from competitors. It depends on the strategy of the company whether they want to reach these customers or not. (Lecklin 2006, 97.)

Former customers have been in a relationship with the company in the past but the relationship has been terminated. Getting former customers back is

difficult but possible process. There is also a possibility to learn from former relationships. The reasons for relationship termination should be studied and direct contact with the former customer might be a great learning experience. (Lecklin 2006, 97.)

#### 2.4.2 Process of customer segmentation

There are many different views on how customer segmentation should be conducted. One way according to Ala-Mutka and Talvela (2004) is to go through a four stage segmentation process. The first step is to collect and analyze data of the customer. Company's databases are used to collect information from. Information is then collected into a long-list which includes different criteria for segmentation. Customer profitability, strength and depth of the relationship, sales volume to a specific customer and product ranges are possible segmentation criteria. After this, information from different segments is analyzed and a short-list is formed. In the short-list the most important customer segmentation criteria are used as a basis for segmentation. Factors influencing decision making process are customer strategy, resources, service channels and competition in a specific market segment. The last step is to form customer segments according to information that was collected during the whole process. Each of the segments needs a differentiated operating plan. Marketing efforts are then made to reach different segments. (Ala-Mutka & Talvela 2004, 54-55.)

When the customer segmentation process is done, the next step is to choose the most suitable segments for the company. Customer buying behavior, buying criterion and customer benefits should be analyzed. According to Bergström and Leppänen (2009) the company needs to choose a segmentation strategy before choosing the groups that are targeted. There are two different possibilities to target marketing efforts to different groups. These marketing efforts are as follows. (Bergström & Leppänen 2009, 158.)

Concentrated marketing means that marketing is done to a small and specific segment. Everything included in marketing plan is tailored to fit the needs of

this segment. This type of marketing is the selection of a company which is specialized in a certain field of business and is usually a small in size. By concentrating their marketing efforts they can make sure that they can fulfill the needs of the segments. This ensures that the company has a competitive advantage and an uncompromised position at the markets. For a small company this really important. (Bergström & Leppänen 2009, 158)

Differentiated marketing means that the marketing plans are done keeping in mind several different customer segments. There is a need for a marketing plan and product range differentiation. There is a larger risk involved when using differentiated marketing because there are lot more investments to be made. Usually differentiated marketing is done by a company that has the needed resources to meet the needs of many different segments. In other words, bigger companies offering several products or services, chooses this segmentation strategy. (Bergström & Leppänen 2009, 158.)

## 2.5 Customer expectations

Customers expect to get something more than just products or services out of the relationship they have with a company. These expectations create more than just monetary value for the customer. Customer expectations are something that a successful CRM project should be build according to. When customer expectations are understood correctly, better ways to meet these expectations can be found. Here are some expectations customers might have. (Dimitriadis 2008, 501-502.)

- Confidence and security; especially long-term relationships create confidence and security for the customer.
- Time savings; time saved when dealing with a familiar company is valuable.
- Convenience; it is easier to deal with a certain company in comparison to find a new one.
- Better purchase decision; decisions can be made faster and more efficiently.

- Financial returns; customer can get financial returns in the form of discounts through relationship customization.
- Customization; customizing the contract and discounts are highly respected by the customer.
- Social satisfaction; customer gets social satisfaction when dealing with a company (Dimitriadis 2008, 502).

These expectations vary and it depends highly on the personality of the customer, what he/she expects from the relationship. In b-to-b relationships these same types of expectations are common and can be explained roughly the same way. (Dimitriadis 2008, 501.)

From the company's perspective customer expectations are important. Inside the company, there has to be an understanding on what their customers are expecting. Through this understanding the expectations can be met. There are several different ways to get an understanding of customer expectations. One of the best ways is to conduct customer surveys using emails or paper forms. These surveys can be done at the time of business transactions or at any time. Customer surveys should be analyzed and the data as a tool to develop customer management. (Dimitriadis 2008, 501.)

## 2.6 Customer satisfaction

Companies invest lot of resources on getting better understanding on what creates customer satisfaction. Customer satisfaction is crucial because satisfied customers tend to be loyal and bring in profit during a longer period of time. Through the understanding of customer expectations higher level of customer satisfaction is easier to achieve. In this sense of the matter customer expectations and customer satisfaction goes hand in hand. Customer satisfaction, loyalty and repurchases form a link that is important for the company. These factors create a competitive advantage through loyal customers and increased customer satisfaction. Competition for customers is hard so loyal and satisfied customers are a good asset for the company to have. (Curtis et al. 2011, 3.)

Customer satisfaction has been defined in many ways. One good definition is that *“Satisfaction is the consumer's fulfillment response. It is a judgment that a product or service feature, or the product or service, itself, provided a pleasurable level of consumption related fulfillment, including levels of under- or overfulfillment.”* (Curtis et al. 2011, 3.)

Customer satisfaction indicates that the company is doing well and has future prospects. It prevents customers churn, reduces marketing costs and improves reputation of the company. Customer satisfaction has a direct link between the company's promise for their customers and their ability to fulfill these promises. Understanding the satisfying products or services which are offered, is the most important factor because customer loyalty comes from brand loyalty. (Curtis et al. 2011, 41.)

## 2.7 Customer loyalty

Customer loyalty can be divided into three different constructs; behavioral loyalty, attitudinal loyalty and composite loyalty. (Curtis et al. 2011, 3.)

Behavioral loyalty relies on the customer's actual conduct. This means that the customer is loyal to the company if they buy from the company and continue to buy in the future. Repurchasing is considered to be the corner stone of customer loyalty. Rate of repurchasing can be increased by different means by the company. Possible ways to increase the rate of repurchasing are to improve the brand preference, product quality or the level of customer satisfaction. (Peppers & Rodgers, 2009.)

Attitudinal loyalty can be seen as a state of mind of the customer. Loyalty comes from the customer's positive attitude towards the company. They prefer the company and the products or services they offer over the competitors of the company. This means that the customer is willing to buy from company A even if company B is offering even if the products or services offered are equivalent. Attitudinal loyalty can be improved by improving the products and

services, the image of the company and the elements of customer experience. (Peppers & Rodgers, 2009.)

Composite loyalty is combination of behavioral and attitudinal loyalty. Customer loyalty is seen something that includes purchasing and repurchasing as well as positive attitude towards the company and their offerings. (Curtis et al. 2011, 4.)

There is a definite link between customer satisfaction and loyalty. Higher level of customer satisfaction creates customer loyalty. Customer satisfaction and customer loyalty does increase the level of repurchasing which is one of the main concerns when trying to pursuit higher profits. (Curtis et al. 2011, 3-4.)

## 2.8 Customer repurchases

When the customer buys a similar product or service more than one occasion, it is considered to be a repurchase. From the company's perspective a repurchase means that the customer keep coming back to buy products or services from them. Customer satisfaction and loyalty create repurchasing behavior. (Curtis et al. 2011, 4.)

There are two different customer repurchase patterns. First is the customers' actual intension for repurchases and the second is the intention to spread positive word-of-mouth and recommendations to other possible customers. (Curtis et al. 2011, 4-5.)

According to Curtis, Abratt, Rhoades and Dion (2011, 5) seven factors influence the customers' repurchase intention. These are:

- Service quality; the customers' overall view of the standard of the service delivered.
- Equity; the customers' overall view of the company's fairness and justice of the service transaction and customer problem and complaint handling process.

- Value; the customers' perceived appraisal of the net worth of the service.
- Customer satisfaction; the degree of pleasure the customer feels resulting from the ability of the service to fulfill customer's desires and expectations.
- Past loyalty; the amount of transactions the customer has had with the same company over the past years.
- Expected switching costs; personal time, effort and money needed to change to a different service provider.
- Brand preference; the customer's level of favoring the company's products or services compared to another companies. (Curtis et al. 2011, 5.)

### 3 CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT

CRM has evolved greatly during the last 15 years through the use computers and internet services. It is easier to get and use the information coming from different customer groups. One the most important feature of CRM is data collection and the possibility to use that data. Companies need to implement different kinds of ways to collect, to process and use the data. Data systems need to be integrated in to the operations of companies, so that the valuable data coming from the customers can be used as effectively as possible. These data systems mainly monitor customer information such as name, phone number and past transactions. CRM data tools gather all the data in one place so that is easier to access. This helps the company to see which customers are profitable and which are not. Time and money should be placed on profitable and potential new customers.

Sometimes it is not desirable to acquire new customers. Instead, the focus should be on already existing customers. CRM helps to build and develop these relationships. Through the use of CRM companies get better understanding of their customers and how the relationships could be developed keeping the customers' interest in mind. (Dimitriadis 2008, 498.)



Marketing is also linked with CRM. In the field of marketing customer relationship management is seen as “*an ongoing process that involves the development and leveraging of market intelligence for the purpose of building and maintaining a profit-maximizing portfolio of customer relationships*”. Marketing sees CRM as a tool to understand the information coming from the markets better. The focus is on the customer relationships and getting the most out of them. (Dimitriadis 2008, 498.)

### 3.1 Defining customer relationship management

CRM has been defined in many various ways by different authors. Most of them describe it as a strategy, a process, a philosophy, a capability or as a technological tool. One good definition is that CRM is a combination of strategy and information systems to help to understand the company's perspective on their customers so that the customers can be served better. In other words CRM creates understanding on different levels how the customers should be handled. Understanding customers is one of the key factors for any company because satisfied and happy customers are crucial for a successful business. Customers that are satisfied tend to return and create long-term relationships. (Dimitriadis 2008, 499.)

On the other hand CRM can be seen as a tool to create customer value, to view a product or service as a process and to understand providers' responsibilities. Customer value creation means that creating long-term relationships with the customer is far more important than trying to create as profitable relationships as fast as possible. Price of the product or service is not necessarily competitive advantage for the company. Steady stream of repurchases create a significant increase in profitability. One key aspect when creating long-term relationships is to let the customer to understand their own value and go on from there. (Lehtinen & Storbacka 2001, 5-6.)

Seeing a product or service as a process is important, so that competence of the company can be seen by the customers. It is not only just selling the product but to make the process of exchange in a way that the customer

expectations and satisfaction can be reached. This same stands for services as well. (Lehtinen & Storbacka 2001, 5.)

Providers' responsibilities are to satisfy the customer needs on all levels. It also means that the company should try to create long-term relationships with the customer. Providers' responsibilities are the most important factor when trying to please the customer and to make sure that they keep coming back. (Lehtinen & Storbacka 2001, 5.)

IT has a big role in CRM because the information needed for CRM comes from data warehouses the company is using. All of the information about customers is stored in to these warehouses. CRM has been defined as eCRM which is electronic CRM but there is also a concept called hCRM. This means that there should also be human side of the CRM. Computers are used to as main tools of CRM but behind it there is a desire to serve customers better and deepen the relationships with them. These factors come from all the people inside the company involved. (Gummersson 2004, 41.)

### 3.2 Importance of customer relationship management

The main goal of customer relationship management is to create customer loyalty. An effective customer relationship management project creates customer satisfaction which leads to trustworthy relationships with the customers. This helps the company to retain their competitive advantage on the market place. (Swift 2001, 17.)

Competition in customer acquiring is hard, so it is better for the company to develop their relationships with their already existing customers. This is where a good CRM project can really reduce costs of acquiring new customers because the company is mainly trying to get the most out their relationships with existing customers. The process of acquiring new customers is highly expensive because of the marketing that is needed, making the company visible for the customers and also meeting the customer needs. (Swift 2001, 7.)

Through CRM companies get a change to use the data from their databases to achieve customer retention and to cross-sell different products to already existing customers. This means that already existing customer relationships can possibly more profitable for the company. (Blery & Michalakopoulos 2006, 117.)

Trough a well organized CRM project customer loyalty goes up, which leads to more sales and more revenue. Loyal customers are satisfied and prefer the products or services of the company, more than they do the competitors'. (Peppers & Rodgers 2004, 301.)

Costs coming from the relationships with the suppliers can be reduced by a well planned CRM project. A long-term relationship with suppliers or with just one supplier is beneficial. CRM helps the company to see which suppliers are the best options for them. Information is gathered not only on customer transactions but also from transactions with the suppliers. Usually it is economically beneficial for the company to reduce the number of suppliers. It is also less complex to deal with only one or just few suppliers. This of course depends on the size of the company, the bigger companies obviously have a larger number of suppliers. (Blery & Michalakopoulos 2006, 120.)

### 3.3 Integration of CRM

Integration of a CRM project cannot happen all at once. There are several departments that all need to understand different aspects of the CRM project. Everyone involved should be trained to understand the importance of CRM for the company and for the customer relationship management in general.

Company needs to create a customer strategy and follow it, to make long-term profit coming from long-term customer relationships. Main focus of the strategy should be about finding the right ways to communicate with right customers, offering right product and price, using the right distribution channels and doing all this at the right time. (Swift 2001, 7.)

Integration of CRM also includes instalment of computer programs. CRM programs are essential part of a successful CRM project. Customer information systems (CIS) are used to gather information about the customers as the relationship with the company develops. Usually companies carefully select just one program to make data collection and usage of it as easy as possible. The program should be simple enough so that everyone in the organisation is able to use it. If needed, training should be arranged. (Swift 2001, 7-10.)

### 3.4 Strategic approach to CRM

There are different elements that are part of successful customer relationship management operations. One of the most important factors when implementing a CRM is a well thought out strategy. Company strategy is separate from the company's customer strategy but gives the direction for CRM project. These following steps are to be made. (Dimitriadis 2008, 499-500.)

- Creating a clear company vision (idea of the future and the direction which the company is going to take).
- Setting goals for short, mid and long-term periods.
- Selection of segments and customer groups.
- Choosing the way to customize customer experience (one-to-one, mass customization, selective customization).
- Commitment on financial level (investments made).

Company vision states the direction the company is going to take and also what is planned to happen in the future. Clear and realistic vision can be a great asset but an unrealistic one can derail the whole company. So, time and thought should be used when planning company vision. Setting goal for the company works as a motivational factor and these goals should also be realistic. It is easier to set short-term goals but mid and long-term goals are more difficult. Goals are mainly about numbers for example how much of products or services should be sold in a certain time period. Goals should

realistic especially what comes to numbers. Selecting segments and different customer groups is one the most important steps when implementing CRM strategy. Segmentation has to do with each customer separately. Customer groups consist of customers that have same kinds of attributes. Segmentation and customer groups will be explained later in this report in detail. One of the best ways to create a good experience for the customers is through customer customizing. Customizing can be done on the basis of one-to-one, mass customization or selective customization. Discounts are probably the most common way to customize a customer relationship. Also terms of the contract with the customers can be customized, for example terms of payment and delivery. Last step is to invest required amount of capital in to different projects, including CRM projects. Costs of CRM project come mainly from instalment of computer programs and training. (Dimitriadis 2008, 498-500.)

These strategy steps gives the company an idea what they are doing, how they are going to do it, seeing the results and how to deal with their customers. All of these things are cornerstones of a successful CRM project. CRM strategy has to lined up with customer strategy of the company.

### 3.5 Data collection of CRM

Data collection needs to be done in order to use CRM as a benefit. What kind of data is collected depends on the decisions made by the company. Data warehouses might include age, gender, marital status, family configuration, buying habits and history.

After the data is collected data mining can be used and customers can be picked according of their information. For example customers that have similar type of buying habits can be gathered in a group. This really helps in customer segmentation and in marketing. Data collection also helps the company to compare their customers when they have different types of information patterns. Benefits of this come from the fact that not all relationships are desired, so the termination becomes easier when customers can be compared. It is important the data is stored in one location. In many

companies data is saved in multiple databases which lead to data quality issues. If the company is trying implementing CRM it is critical to invest in a data collection system that is used through the whole enterprise. (Peppers & Rodgers 2004, 98-99.)

The main idea behind data collection, when it comes to CRM, is to get better understanding of the customers and to develop relationships with them. Convenience for the company and the customers is another reason for data collection. The future transactions become a lot easier, cheaper and faster when there is information of the past transactions. (Peppers & Rodgers 2004, 99.)

Paying terms and conditions are saved and delivery can be organized like it has been in the past. Knowing details about the customer when they come back is a great way to strengthen relationships. It makes the customer to feel that they are important and the relationship they have with the company is important. This creates customer satisfaction which leads to bigger profits in the long run. Data collection can be used when the company is trying to figure out which customers are good for them. (Peppers & Rodgers 2004, 100.)

### 3.6 What kind of data to collect

The most important is the name of the customer. According to Peppers and Rodgers (2004, 99) the name is not efficient way identify customers because many companies have similar kinds of names. Using customer numbers and other identification like phone number or a user names are better methods to identify each individual customer record. (Peppers & Rodgers 2004, 99-100.)

Past transactions details and other type data generated from customer transactions are important and can have a significant impact. According to Peppers and Rodgers (2004, 99) *“information relating to billing and account status, customer service interactions, back orders, product shipment, product returns, claims history, and internal operating costs can significantly affect the company’s understanding of its customers”*. This kind of data is called directly

supplied data which means that data is collected directly from the customers. Directly supplied data includes three different types. These types are according to Peppers and Rodgers (2004, 100);

- Behavioral data; purchase and buying habits, click stream data, interactions with the company, communication channels chosen, language used, product consumption, and company's share of wallet.
- Attitudinal data; attitudes about products, satisfaction level, perceived competitive positioning, desired features, unmet needs, lifestyles, brand preferences, social and personal values, opinions and the like.
- Demographic data; age, income, education level, marital status, household composition, gender, home ownership and so on. (Peppers & Rodgers 2004, 100).

### 3.7 Customer information system

Installing a customer information system is a strategically important decision which the company has to make. The ability of the company to use the information coming from the customer relationships, measures the sophistication of their CIS. CRM is dependable of the use of CIS because CRM involves large amount of customer data to be saved and analyzed. CIS also allows the company to use this data which is one the key elements of CRM. (Zahay & Griffin 2004, 170-172.)

Customer information systems are possibilities for the company to gain customer understanding. CIS are described as learning processes of the organizations on information management. In theory CIS can be divided into four behavioral patterns that learning organizations use when developing their customer knowledge systems. (Zahay & Griffin 2004, 173.)

Table 1. CIS behavioural patterns (Zahay &amp; Griffin 2004, 172)

<b>Generation</b>  Processes and systems to collect customer information.	<b>Memory</b>  Systems and processes to store customer information for future use.
<b>Dissemination</b>  Processes and systems for spreading customer information horizontally and vertically through the organization.	<b>Interpretation</b>  Processes to give customer information one or more shared meanings that are used.

#### 4 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Customer relationship management is a tool that helps to get better understanding of customers and to realize what they really want. Theories included in this report are aspects that are key elements for successful customer relationships. The idea for this study came from the owner of Mediakanava who stated in brief meeting that one of the biggest challenges when running a business is to keep customer satisfied and coming back in the future. This problem creates the whole idea behind this study. Mediakanava is willing to improve their ways to manage their customers. The theories are selected keeping in mind that the research question is about already existing customer relationships and how to improve them.

The first parts of theories explained are about customer relationships. It was a natural decision to choose to research this area carefully because customer relationships and management of them are the main focus of this report. At first customer relationships are defined, to get an understanding what factors



are needed in relationships. It is important for the company to understand differences between different customer groups. These groups are defined in detail. Understanding customer groups creates a solid base for customer segmentation which is also included in theories explained.

Customer segmentation can save a lot of resources if it is done with care. Wasted resources are bad for any company so different theories about customer segmentation are explained in detail. When segmentation is done correctly right kinds of efforts can be made to make the company visible for the right type of customers. This is beneficial for the company but also for the customer. CRM project helps segmentation significantly because information is stored and it is easy to access.

B-to-b relationships are different from b-to-c relationships mainly because there are limited numbers of other businesses available in operated field of business. In this report evolvement of b-to-b relationships is explained. The reason behind this is that especially the early stages of relationships are crucial for the potential development of the relationship.

There are four key elements that make average customer relationships to great ones. These are customer expectations, satisfaction, loyalty and repurchases. Companies that are aware of these and the causes behind them are usually successful. CRM helps the company to collect information and to create a customer strategy that focuses on customer satisfaction and loyalty. There is a cycle between customer expectations, satisfaction, loyalty and repurchases. Figure 1 shows how these things are related to each others.

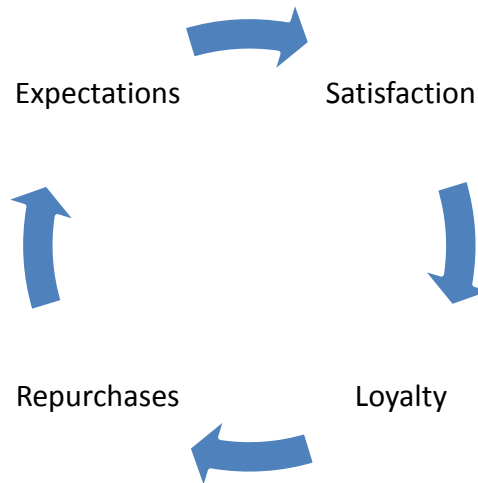


Figure 1. Cycle of success

This cycle demonstrates how these four factors affect each others. After customer has made repurchases the expectations are evaluated again and the cycle repeats itself. These four things are keys when trying to find an answer to the research question because the idea is to develop already existing customer relationships.

The next theories explained in this report concerns CRM and different aspects about it. Defining CRM is the first step when trying to get a deeper understanding of it. Different authors define CRM in very different ways and to make it clearer few different explanations are used. CRM is main topic which includes all of the other topics.

Importance of CRM for a company is explained to get an understanding on how CRM effects the operations of the company. This is one the main focuses of this report and the research question was formed keeping this in mind. Mediakanava has been operating for 30 years and when they were starting CRM was not something lot of companies was focusing on. If a company gets along well without really managing its customers the need for CRM is missing. Mediakanava has done well over the years without focusing too much on CRM at least knowingly. So explaining the importance of CRM and showing some theories of how it can improve the co-operations with customers.

Data collection is the most important thing when keeping CRM in mind. There has to be a customer database with advanced information about the customers. Not just basic information like name of the company, phone numbers, websites and so on. The decision to include this chapter into the report was easy because Mediakanava is not collecting data on a larger scale. There is a need for improvement in this matter.

These introduced theories form the outlines for this study. The research question is answered with the help of the theories and the information coming from Mediakanava and their customers. Summary of major results is done also using the theories as a source of information to make suggestions on possible improvements.

## 5 PILOT STUDY

This chapter is done based on the information about the current level of customer relationship management of Mediakanava. The information was collected from an interview with the owner of Mediakanava on 4 October 2012. The interview took about an hour. The interview was done by using a mobile phone and the call was recorded to help making the analysis. Next part of this chapter is the presentation of the data collected. The main points are introduced and major findings explained in the second part which is an analysis of data. The data is analyzed keeping the research questions in mind so that real improvement suggestions can be made in the conclusions chapter.

### 5.1 Presentation of data

An interview with the owner of Mediakanava was done on 4 October 2012. Hannu Hynynen is the owner. The questions asked were made keeping in mind the research question. The questions will be introduced and explanations why these specific questions were chosen. There were total of 12 questions in the interview.

The first question, the owners own vision about the level of customer relationship management at the present moment. This question is the basis for the whole study and choosing it was a natural decision. This report is trying to find ways to improve the way Mediakanava manages their customers.

The second question is also linked to customer relationship management and to the core of a successful CRM project. The question was that does Mediakanava use CRM computer software to for example to collect and to store customer information. The backbone for CRM is to have relevant information about the customers, for example past transactions and so on. Also important is to have the information available in a form that it can be used to improve customer relations. These are the main reasons behind this question.

The third question was already existing customer relationships and ways to improve their profitability. This is also one of the key things about this report, instead of using lot of resources to acquire new customers, the focus is more on already existing customers. Many times building existing customer relationships is more profitable for the company. Through CRM these customer relationships can be deepened and become more lucrative.

The fourth question is about customer data and types information collected. This question is linked to the second question and the reason behind this question is that collecting customer information is important. Without customer information is hard to see the customers' buying behavior in the long run. Customer information helps the company to tailor their offerings the specific customers which leads to higher levels of customer satisfaction. The fifth question is tightly linked to the fourth question. The question was that how Mediakanava uses the information for their benefit.

The sixth question is about the evaluation of profitability of customer relationships and their potential for growth. This question is important so that an understanding can be reached on which customers are the most important

ones. It is a big part of CRM to see which customers are worth of keeping and the relationships that have potential to be profitable in the future.

The seventh question focuses on customer satisfaction surveys. Companies should do surveys from time to time to see if their customers are truly satisfied. Customer satisfaction is one main thing when thinking about customer repurchases. Satisfied customers keep coming back and they form long-term relationships with the company. These are the reasons behind this question.

The eighth question is also about customer satisfaction and about finding ways to increase the level of it. Companies use many different ways to increase customer satisfaction, from business gifts to lower prices. The importance of customer satisfaction is crucial to understand and the ways increasing the level of it. Customer satisfaction is important part of this report.

The ninth question is about long-term customer relationships and what kind of extra offerings can be used for these customers. Mediakanava has customers that have been with them for more 30 years. It is obvious that these customers are satisfied but it is a wise business decision to give them something extra. Long-term relationships usually deepen on more levels than just business and people involved get to know each other's quite well.

The tenth question turns things around a bit and the approach is from Mediakanavas' perspective. What are they expecting from their customers? Sometimes turning the tables can be an eye opener, and new ideas can emerge from it. The reasons behind this question are just see the things that are important for Mediakanava.

Next two questions are about customer segmentation. The eleventh question is a basic one, have you divided customers into different segments. Customer segmentation is important part of CRM and it helps the company to focus their efforts to right kind of customers. The twelfth question is about offering tailored service packages to different customer segments. Segmentation is something

that cannot be left out of report about CRM. This is the reason why it is introduced in the theoretical framework and also asked when making the interview.

## 5.2 Analysis of data

In this chapter the results and findings from the interview will be presented and compared to different parts of the theoretical framework. From the findings some possible improvement ideas can be made and those will be presented in conclusions. Each answer will be presented individually and its relation to a specific theory is explained.

The first question is quite a broad one and it can be understood in many ways. Hannu Hynynen stated that level of customer relationship management is quite all right at the moment but there is a definite need for improvements. Mediakanava is a one man business, so time and dedication for improving of CRM are limited and that is why it has not been their main focus. Theories introduced in this report state that CRM is important and time and money should be invested in it. It can boost the operations especially in a longer period of time. Through the use of CRM customers can be served better and more efficiently. According to Dimitriadis (2008, 498) sometimes it is not desirable to acquire new customers. Instead the focus should be on already existing customers. CRM helps to build and develop these relationships. Through the use of CRM companies get better understanding of their customers and how the relationships could be developed keeping the customers' interest in mind.

The Second question is simple and straight forward. Mediakanava is not using CRM computer applications because there has not been a need for that, according to Hannu Hynynen. He stated that they only have some basic information about the customers like the name of the company and the contact person, phone numbers, the website and so on. He doesn't collect information about buying behavior of different customers, or about past transactions. From the theories it can be seen that CRM software is crucial for

the success of a CRM project. Gummersson (2004, 41) uses a concept of eCRM which means that CRM is mainly electronic because of the use of computers. Without customer information it is difficult to improve and deepen the relationships with customers. Even for a small sized company CRM software is a create tool to improve customer management. Faster and more convenient buying situations are desired by the customers and by collecting data the company can improve the whole process. According to Swift (2001, 7-10) a CRM computer software is the most important part of CRM. It can clearly be seen that previous literature works are pointing out the importance of the CRM computer software.

The third question deals with customer relationships and how to improve their profitability. Hannu Hynynen stated that it difficult to accurately evaluate which customers are profitable and which are not. He said that the only way to do this is to compare costs to profits coming from each customer separately. He said that there are several ways to improve profitability of these relationships in the long run. Giving discounts to already existing customers are a good way to create more sales in the future. Also giving something extra during the whole process has proved to be a good way to increase profitability. Concert tickets, business gifts and so on. Knowing the customer on a personal level is also important. According to theories increasing customer satisfaction and being aware of what the customers are expecting are good ways to increase profitability. According to Mäntyneva (2001, 27-29) customers can be segmented using their profitability as a criteria. Sometimes less profitable relationships should be terminated to save resources and focus on more profitable customers.

Next questions are about customer information and how to use the collected information. Hannu Hynynen stated that he is not collecting anything but the really basic information about his customers. He has basic information and then some personal information for example hobbies. Knowing the hobbies of a certain he can something extra for example tickets sporting events that he or she is interested in. Customer information is important part CRM according to theories presented in this report. According to Peppers and Rodgers (2004,

99) the main idea behind data collection, when it comes to CRM, is to get better understanding of the customers and to develop relationships with them. Convenience for the company and the customers is another reason for data collection. The future transactions become a lot easier, cheaper and faster when there is information of the past transactions.

The sixth question is related to the third question. It is about the evaluation of profitability of customer relationships' and different ways to do it. According to Hannu Hynynen the best way to evaluate profitability is through costs and revenues coming from each relationship separately. This question has a second part which is how to evaluate the potential growth of the relationships. It can be done simply by just by thinking about different industries and the direction they are going. Companies that are working on industries which are growing are more likely to increase their demands for Mediakanavas' services. Customers can be segmented according to their industries. Bergström and Leppänen (2009, 154) stated in their book that one important factor when segmenting B-to-B customers, is to focus on industries and their possible growth in the future.

Next question is about customer satisfaction surveys. Hannu Hynynen stated that he has done only one formal customer satisfaction survey and it was in the 90's. He feels like there has not been any need for more surveys because most his customers have stayed with Mediakanava for many years. It shows that the customers are satisfied. Customer satisfaction surveys are important and the way they are conducted is even more important. While making this thesis customer survey was sent to the customers of Mediakanava with high expectations of high number of answers. The survey was in electronic form and it was easy to fill, even so the number of answers was a disappointment. Problem in this case was probably the tight schedule given for the customers to answer.

The eighth question is also about customer satisfaction and about different ways to increase the level of it. Mediakanava focuses on the visibility of the advertising on different events. This is important for the customers because



they want their advertising to be as visible as possible. Yle controls sizes and placements of the advertising in TV events. Logos seen on the advertising can be made better and clearer to see by the public watching at the event and also by those watching the event from television. Mediakanava gives their customers extra advertising for free and also tickets to different events where the customers' advertising is seen. Meeting the customers personally increases customer satisfaction because it creates the feeling that Mediakanava cares about them. Mediakanava provides their customers with TV viewer ratings of events. This is the core of Mediakanavas' operations, they help companies to be visible for the public. These are good ways to increase the level customer satisfaction because they create a feeling that Mediakanava truly cares about their customers. Giving the customers high quality services for reasonable prices is one thing, but adding something extra to the whole package really increases satisfaction. According to Curtis, Abratt, Rhoades and Dion (2011, 3) through the understanding of customer expectations higher level of customer satisfaction is easier to achieve. In this sense of the matter customer expectations and customer satisfaction goes hand in hand.

Next question deals with customers who are in a long-term relationship with Mediakanava. There are different ways that Mediakanava uses to award these customers. Discounts are a natural decision when pleasing long-term customers, also adding extra services to the service package is used. Hannu Hynynen gives business gifts to his faithful customers which leads to increasing in satisfaction levels. Long-term relationships are linked to customer expectations and satisfaction. When the customer feels that their expectations are heard and understood, and their satisfaction is high, they keep coming back. It takes only little things to improve customer relationships. Long-term customers are important just because of the fact that they make repurchases. Loyalty to Mediakanava leads to repurchases. There are three different types of customer loyalty presented in previous literature. First is, according to Peppers and Rodgers (2009), behavioral loyalty which relies on the customer's actual conduct. This means that the customer is loyal to the

company if they buy from the company and continue to buy in the future. Repurchasing is considered to be the corner stone of customer loyalty. Rate of repurchasing can be increased by different means by the company. The second is attitudinal loyalty. It can be seen as a state of mind of the customer. Loyalty comes from the customer's positive attitude towards the company. They prefer the company and the products or services they offer over the competitors of the company. This means that the customer is willing to buy from company A even if company B is offering even if the products or services offered are equivalent. The third is, according to Curtis, Abratt, Rhoades and Dion (2011, 4), composite loyalty. It is a combination of behavioral and attitudinal loyalty. Customer loyalty is seen something that includes purchasing and repurchasing as well as positive attitude towards the company and their offerings.

Next question is about what is Mediakanava expecting from the customers. This question is outside the theoretical framework but it is interesting to hear important things from Mediakanavas' perspective. Paying for services in time is obviously the most important thing for any company. Hannu Hynynen stated that there have never been any problems with payments coming from his customers. He expects his customers to give feedback after the whole process and especially if there is negative things to say. This way he can improve his operations. When a customer says that there was something wrong with the service and Mediakanava learns from it, customer satisfaction goes up. Mediakanava expects their customers to be open and relaxed when dealing with the company. This creates an atmosphere that is beneficial for both parties.

The last two questions are about customer segmentation and differentiated offerings offered to each segment. Hannu Hynynen said that he has not segmented his customers to different groups because he feels like there has not been a need for that. Sometimes he had a dancing contest in an event that was directed for women and also advertising was selected to fit that particular event. This is not customer segmentation like segmentation is explained in theories but it has same elements. Segmentation is important

part of CRM because it helps the company focus their efforts to right kind of customers. According to Bergström and Leppänen (2009, 158) customers have different kinds of expectations, needs and preferences so managing all of them in one way is not a vice business decision. Segmentation gives the company guidelines on what offer to a specific customer group. This creates value to the company through effective marketing efforts. According to Bergström & Leppänen (2009, 158) if the customers are not segmented at all, the company assumes that all of the customers have similar needs and expectations.

## 6 SURVEY

A customer survey was conducted for the customers of Mediakanava in order to deepen the understanding of customer relationship management. ZEF is the selected platform that was used to create the survey. It is an internet based program that is used to create surveys. The survey was send to 20 customers of Mediakanava on 11 October 2012 and they were given five days to give their answers. The idea behind the survey was to see what things are important for customers in a relationship. The survey focuses on customer expectations, satisfaction and repurchases.

### 6.1 Presentation of data

There are four different question categories in the customer survey and all of them have several different questions in them. In this chapter all of the categories are introduced and also reasons why these questions were chosen. While making the survey theoretical framework was kept in mind and it helped to focus on the relevant factors.

The first category is basic information. This is includes questions about the name of the company, industry of the company and the amount years of years they have been doing business with Mediakanava. The reason for choosing to ask these kinds of questions was just to get an idea what kind of companies is Mediakanava dealing with. It is also interesting to see how many years they

have been on a customer relationship with Mediakanava and how this fact moulds their answers. These three questions are not directly linked to the theoretical framework but when doing a survey it is appropriate to ask basic information.

The second category is customer expectations in a customer relationship. This category has nine different statements in it. The statements are given and then there are several different options to choose for an answer. The statements are chosen from theories introduced in this report. The statements in this category are related to theories about customer expectations. They are as follows.

- Prices of services affect your expectations.
- You use the prices to evaluate if your expectations were fulfilled.
- Convenience is part of your expectations when doing business with Mediakanava.
- Confidence and security are part of your expectations when doing business with Mediakanava.
- Time savings are part of your expectations.
- The level customer service has effect when evaluating the fulfillment of your expectations.
- You expect to get tailored terms of contract.
- Doing business with Mediakanava has matched your expectations.
- Mediakanava understands your expectations.

The third category is customer satisfaction. This category has nine different statements in it. The statements are given and there are several different options to choose for an answer. The statements are chosen from the theories introduced in this report. The questions are introduced separately below.

- The prices of services affect the level of your satisfaction.
- The quality of services affects the level of your satisfaction.
- The quality of customer service affects the level of your satisfaction.

- Contact speed affects the level of your satisfaction.
- Speed of customer service affects the level of your satisfaction.
- Tailored services increase the level of satisfaction.
- Offered extra services increase the level of satisfaction.
- Personal contact to the service provider increases the level of satisfaction.
- You have been satisfied when doing business with Mediakanava.

The fourth category is customer repurchases and reasons behind them. This category has seven different statements and one question in it. The statements are given and there are several different options to choose for an answer. The question has two different options for an answer. The statements are selected keeping the theoretical framework in mind. They are introduced below.

- The quality of services affects your repurchase decision.
- Satisfaction to the whole buying process affects your repurchase decision.
- Net worth of the services for you affects your repurchase decision.
- Previous experiences with Mediakanava affect your repurchase decision.
- Fairness during the buying process affects your repurchase decision.
- Switching costs, when switching the service provider, affects your repurchase decision.
- Loyalty to the services and products of the company affects your repurchase decision.
- How often you do repurchases from Mediakanava?

## 6.2 Analysis of data

The survey was sent to 20 customers of Mediakanava but only four customers gave their answers to the survey, so analysis of data is limited. Some of significant results from Mediakanavas' perspective will be introduced here in a

form of tables. From only four sets of answers is not wise to make graphs because they might not show any relevant results.

Four companies that answered the survey are introduced first and how many years they have been doing business with Mediakanava. These companies are Rautia, Oy Kaha AB, DB Schenker and LähiTapiola. From the results it can be seen that the customers have been in a relationship with Mediakanava from five to ten years. Hannu Hynynen stated in the interview that most of his customers have been with his company for several years. This is one key thing for Mediakanavas' success and the fact they have been operating without ever making a year with deficit. Long-term relationships save resources because the company does not necessarily have to seek for new customers. This saves money and time. Marketing to attract customers takes a lot of investments, time and money according to Swift (2001, 3).

From the next set of answers the level of satisfaction during these years can be seen. The statement was that you have been satisfied when doing business with Mediakanava.

Table 2. Customer satisfaction

Name of the company	You have been satisfied when doing business with Mediakanava
Oy Kaha Ab	Totally agree
DB Schenker	Partly agree
Rautia	Partly agree
LähiTapiola	Partly agree

It can be seen that the customers seem to be satisfied when doing business with Mediakanava. Because of the low number of answers it is not possible to get a picture of the whole situation but it seems that the customers are satisfied. This information is important for Mediakanava because according to Curtis, Abratt, Rhoades and Dion (2011, 41) customer satisfaction has a direct link between the company's promise for their customers and their ability to fulfill these promises. Customers that get a fulfillment of their expectations are likely to keep coming back.

Next table is about customer expectations and how the customers feel that their expectations are understood. The customers' perspective is also brought up here to see if they feel that their expectations are fulfilled.

Table 3. Customer expectations

Name of the company	Mediakanava understands your expectations
Oy Kaha Ab	Totally agree
LähiTapiola	Partly agree
DB Schenker	Partly agree
Rautia	Partly agree

From table 5 it can be seen that customers of Mediakanava feel that their expectations are understood but still there is room for improvement. According to Dimitriadis (2008, 501-502) customer expectations are something that a successful CRM project should be build according to. When customer expectations are understood correctly, better ways to meet these expectations can be found. CRM helps finding out customer expectations through improved dialogue with the customers.

Table 4. Convenience as part of customer expectations

Name of the company	Convenience is part of your expectations when doing business with Mediakanava
Oy Kaha Ab	Totally agree
DB Schenker	Partly agree
LähiTapiola	Partly agree
Rautia	Totally disagree

From table 6 it can be seen that one of the customers does not think that convenience is part of their expectations when doing business with Mediakanava. The reasons behind this might be the location of Mediakanava, terms and conditions of contracts or something else. Many of these companies are Helsinki based companies. Theories introduced in this report show that convenience is usually part of customer expectations. CRM helps the company to make doing business with them more convenient for the customer. According to Dimitriadis (2008, 501) convenience also includes an idea that it is easier and more convenient to do business with a familiar company in comparison finding a new one.



Table 5. Customer repurchases

Name of the Company	Previous experiences with Mediakanava affect your repurchase decision
DB Schenker	Totally agree
AB Kaha Oy	Totally agree
Rautia	Totally agree
LähiTapiola	Partly agree

From table 7 it can be seen that the customers have been satisfied when doing business with Mediakanava and that reason affects their repurchase decisions. According to Curtis, Abratt, Rhoades and Dion (2011, 5) past loyalty is one of the factors influencing customers' repurchase decision. There has to be a positive feeling towards the company which from Mediakanavas' perspective is important.

## 7 CONCLUSIONS

In this chapter the research question is answered. Conclusion and major findings are gathered together to make suggestions how to improve Mediakanavas' customer management. The information gathered from the customer survey was not relevant enough source to be used as a source for any significant improvement suggestions. Reason for this was the lack of answers from the customers. The interview with the owner of Mediakanava is used as a main base for the improvement suggestions. Then the study is evaluated. The last part of this chapter is to examine the need for further research and development.

## 7.1 Summary of major results

The research question is how to develop Mediakanavas' way to deal with their customers. In this part suggestions are made how to improve Mediakanavas' customer management which leads to improved way to deal with the customers. From the interview with the owner of Mediakanava, Hannu Hynynen, it was easy to see that Mediakanava is doing well with their customers and have been doing so for many years. They even have long-term customers who have been with them from the beginning. From this fact it is easy to see that they are doing lot of things right and the customers seem to be satisfied. At the start of this project Hannu Hynynen stated that one the hardest thing is to make sells again next year. Repurchases are an important part of customer relationship management and the factors that lead to it. These things are introduced in this report and possible improvements are made keeping these things in mind. Focusing more on CRM could increase the number of sales during a longer period of time which should be the goal of every company.

However, Mediakanava is not focusing a lot of resources on customer relationship management at the present moment and the main reason for this is the lack of time, according to Hannu Hynynen. The company has been operating the same way for many years and it has not made deficit on any of its' operating years. When the situation is like this it is hard to be motivated to make changes. However, when theories are mirrored to the findings from the interview, it can be seen that there are some possible improvements to be made.

First significant improvement could be investing on CRM computer software and get training on how to use it effectively. The only way to make improvements on customer management is to get information about the customers. According to Peppers and Rodgers (2004, 99) CRM computer software makes all of the transactions more fluent between the company and the customer. Previous literature clearly states that CRM computer software is a truly important investment to make. When the entire customer related

information is located under just one computer application, it is easier to use and analyze it. Mediakanava could store lot of different type of information about their customers. Basic information like they already do, different industries their customers operate on, customer's preferences, past transactions, personal information, extra services that have been offered to a specific customer, contact persons and terms and conditions of the contracts. Peppers and Rodgers (2004, 99) state in their book that *"information relating to billing and account status, customer service interactions, back orders, product shipment, product returns, claims history, and internal operating costs can significantly affect the company's understanding of its customers"*. This kind of computer application makes it easier to run business on every level because everything needed is in one place. So the investment cannot be evaluated only from the increase in profitability during a longer period of time. From the customer survey it can be seen that the customers appreciate tailored contracts and services, CRM helps the company to do this. Knowing about the customers' industry and trends helps significantly when making contracts and selling. Also time saved when operating is something that the customers of Mediakanava values very high. CRM makes the whole selling and delivering process faster because the information needed is already there.

Mediakanava has not done a customer satisfaction survey during the internet era. They have done one but that was done by using a traditional mail. It is hard to get enough relevant answers by using traditional mail. To get most out of a survey there has to be at least a 50 percentage answer rating so that any true conclusions can be made. Using email as a way to spread the survey to all of the customers, there is a better chance to get more answers. Customer satisfaction surveys are great way to notice what parts of the whole selling process are done correctly and what parts need improving. Customer satisfaction is important part of customer management and therefore in cannot be overlooked. According to Curtis, Abratt, Rhoades and Dion (2011, 41) it prevents customers churn, reduces marketing costs and improves reputation of the company. Of course in Mediakanava's case there seems to be a high

level of satisfaction among customers, but even so customer satisfaction survey could be a great way to more detailed information from the customers' perspective. From the customer survey made for this report it was clear to see that customers of Mediakanava are satisfied.

Due to the lack CRM computer software Mediakanava has not segmented their customer into different segments. Customer segmentation can be done based on many different factors. Mediakanava has only B-to-B customers so their focus should be on customer profitability, revenues, volume and density of purchases, company values of the customers, loyalty and customer satisfaction. According to Bergström and Leppänen (2009, 154) there are different criteria for segments in B-to-B business environment. Branch, location and amount of facilities, number personnel and revenue are demographic criteria. A second criterion is lifestyle criterion which includes company values, corporate culture, decision-making process, the needs and values of the decision makers. Third criteria are customer relationship factors which are customer profitability, volume and density of purchases, loyalty and customer satisfaction. These criteria are important when forming customer segments for a company that has only B-to-B customers. Especially focusing on customer profitability and volume and density of purchases is important. Using these factors shows the segments that are desirable and profitable. Sometimes it is vice to get rid of customers that are not bringing in profit and customer segmentation is one way to do this.

## 7.2 Evaluation of the study

This research was done from a quite shallow approach when it comes to CRM. Theories were picked up according to what might be helpful for a company like Mediakanava. Some things are found from the theories that are very useful and in that light some actual improvement ideas were generated. From a discussion with the owner of Mediakanava it seems that for the most part he is aware of the needed improvements. Lack of time is the main reason why he has not acted on the things needing improvements.

The structure of the empirical research, especially the phone interview with Hannu Hynynen, proved out to be very useful. Due to lack of time the interview was done over the phone and recording the call was a good idea. From the interview it was easy to see what areas needed improving. When comparing findings from the interview to previous theories, some kind of improvement plan was conducted. The customer survey was done keeping in mind the theories and the questions were based on it. The results of the customer survey were disappointing because only four customers out of 20 answered. It is not wise to make significant conclusions from only four sets of answers. The survey was done in a hurry and that is probably the main reason why so few customers answered. The customers had only one week to answer and it proved out to be too little time. The lack of information from the customers affects the reliability of this research because the views are coming mainly from theories and from Mediakanava.

This study gives Mediakanava an idea what they should be focusing on when trying to improve customer relationship management. However, due to the lack of information received from the customers, improvements are mainly based on previous theories. This is where further research is needed, to improve dialogue with the customers. Learn to understand what they are expecting and on what aspects of the business relation they are satisfied with.

For me this research offered an opportunity to see how a small sized company deals with their customers. Event advertising is an industry where there is not a lot of competition according to Hannu Hynynen, but in the mist of these hard economical times keeping the customers is not an easy thing. Mediakanava has been successful and using this study as a launching pad they could do even better. Starting to improve their customer relationship management to meet the theories introduced in this report.

This thesis and research work strengthened my interest of becoming an entrepreneur one day. Owner of Mediakanava is going to retire during the next few years and the possibility of me buying the company has been discussed. Even if it never happens, in the future I have plans to have my own company.

Learning about CRM and customer relationships in general definitely is a bonus I got from this research.

### 7.3 Further research and development

There is almost always need for even further research and development. Doing more customer satisfaction surveys and focusing on customer expectations are aspects that should be investigated in a more detailed way. Increasing dialogue with the customers builds the understanding between the parties which leads to better results and an increase in sells. Current trends going on in the industry should be monitored.

Doing an inclusive customer satisfaction survey would give valuable information for further improvements. When doing a survey at least two weeks should be given for the customers to give their answers. At least two reminder messages should be send to make sure that the customers remember to give their answers.

CRM strategy should put on paper and make sure that it is easy to blend into the customer strategy of the company. The purpose of CRM is not to make running a business more confusing, it should help to make sure that the most important asset of the company are managed in the best possible way. Further research should be made on actual CRM strategy and on how to form it.

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## Appendix 1. An interview with Hannu Hynynen (in Finnish)

1/1

1. Oma näkemys asiakassuhteiden johtamisesta yrityksessäsi tällä hetkellä?
2. Onko sinulla käytössä CRM tietokonesovellusta?
3. Mitä keinoja käytät olemassa olevien asiakassuhteiden kannattavuuden parantamiseksi?
4. Keräätkö asiakasinformaatiota? ja jos keräät niin mitä?
5. Kuinka hyödynnät kerättyä informaatiota?
6. Kuinka arvioit asiakassuhteiden kannattavuutta? entä suhteiden kasvupotentiaalia?
7. Oletko tehnyt asiakastyytyväisyys kyselyitä? Jos olet, minkälaisia ja kuinka usein?
8. Mitä keinoja käytät asiakastyytyväisyyden lisäämiseksi?
9. Palkitsetko pitkäaikaisia asiakkaita ja millä tavoilla?
10. Mitä asioita odotat asiakkailta asiakassuhteessa?
11. Oletko jakanut asiakkaat eri ryhmiin (segmentteihin)?
12. Teetkö räätälöityjä palvelupaketteja eri asiakasryhmille?

**Perustiedot:**

1. Yrityksenne nimi
2. Mikä on yrityksenne toimiala?
3. Kuinka monta vuotta olette olleet Mediakanavan asiakkaana?

**Odotukset asiakassuhteessa:**

1. Palveluiden hinnat vaikuttavat odotuksiinne (Vaihtoehtokysymys)

Vaihtoehdot:

- 1. Erittäin paljon
- 2. Paljon
- 3. Jonkin verran
- 4. Ei lainkaan

2. Arvioitte odotuksienne täyttymistä hintojen perusteella ostoprosessin jälkeen (Vaihtoehtokysymys)

Vaihtoehdot:

- 1. Täysin samaa mieltä
- 2. Osittain samaa mieltä
- 3. Täysin eri mieltä
- 4. En osaa sanoa

3. Käytännöllisyys asioidessa Mediakanavan kanssa on osa odotuksianne (Vaihtoehtokysymys)

Vaihtoehdot:

- 1. Täysin samaa mieltä
- 2. Osittain samaa mieltä
- 3. Täysin eri mieltä
- 4. Osittain eri mieltä
- 5. En osaa sanoa

4. Varmuus ja turvallisuus ovat osa odotuksianne asiakassuhteessa Mediakanavan kanssa (Vaihtoehtokysymys)

Vaihtoehdot:

- 1. Täysin samaa mieltä
- 2. Osittain samaa mieltä
- 3. Täysin eri mieltä
- 4. Osittain eri mieltä
- 5. En osaa sanoa

## 5. Ajan säästyminen on osa odotuksianne asiakassuhteessa (Vaihtoehtokysymys) 2/2

Vaihtoehdot:

- 1. Täysin samaa mieltä
- 2. Osittain samaa mieltä
- 3. Täysin eri mieltä
- 4. Osittain eri mieltä
- 5. En osaa sanoa

## 6. Asiakaspalvelun taso vaikuttaa arvioidessa odotuksienne täyttymistä (Vaihtoehtokysymys)

Vaihtoehdot:

- 1. Erittäin paljon
- 2. Paljon
- 3. Jonkin verran
- 4. Ei lainkaan

## 7. Odotatte räätälöityjä sopimusehtoja (Vaihtoehtokysymys)

Vaihtoehdot:

- 1. Täysin samaa mieltä
- 2. Osittain samaa mieltä
- 3. Täysin eri mieltä
- 4. Osittain eri mieltä
- 5. En osaa sanoa

## 8. Asiointi Mediakanavan kanssa on vastannut odotuksianne (Vaihtoehtokysymys)

Vaihtoehdot:

- 1. Täysin samaa mieltä
- 2. Osittain samaa mieltä
- 3. Täysin eri mieltä
- 4. Osittain eri mieltä
- 5. En osaa sanoa

## 9. Mediakanava ymmärtää odotuksenne (Vaihtoehtokysymys)

Vaihtoehdot:

- 1. Täysin samaa mieltä
- 2. Osittain samaa mieltä
- 3. Täysin eri mieltä
- 4. Osittain eri mieltä
- 5. En osaa sanoa

**Tyytyväisyys asiakassuhteessa:**

## 1. Palveluiden hinnat vaikuttaa tyytyväisyytenne tasoon (Vaihtoehtokysymys)

Valitse yksi tai useampi vaihtoehto

Vaihtoehdot:

- 1. Erittäin paljon
- 2. Paljon
- 3. Jonkin verran
- 4. Ei lainkaan

2. Palveluiden laatu vaikuttaa tyytyväisyytenne tasoon (Vaihtoehtokysymys)

Vaihtoehdot:

- 1. Erittäin paljon
- 2. Paljon
- 3. Jonkin verran
- 4. Ei lainkaan

3. Asiakaspalvelun laatu/taso vaikuttaa tyytyväisyytenne tasoon (Vaihtoehtokysymys)

Vaihtoehdot:

- 1. Erittäin paljon
- 2. Paljon
- 3. Jonkin verran
- 4. Ei lainkaan

4. Yhteydenottoonopeus vaikuttaa tyytyväisyytenne tasoon (Vaihtoehtokysymys)

Vaihtoehdot:

- 1. Erittäin paljon
- 2. Paljon
- 3. Jonkin verran
- 4. Ei lainkaan

5. Palvelunopeus vaikuttaa tyytyväisyytenne tasoon (Vaihtoehtokysymys)

Vaihtoehdot:

- 1. Erittäin paljon
- 2. Paljon
- 3. Jonkin verran
- 4. Ei lainkaan

6. Rääätöidyt palvelut lisäävät mielestänne tyytyväisyyttä (Vaihtoehtokysymys)

Vaihtoehdot:

- 1. Täysin samaa mieltä
- 2. Osittain samaa mieltä
- 3. Täysin eri mieltä
- 4. Osittain eri mieltä
- 5. En osaa sanoa

7. Tarjottavat lisäpalvelut lisäävät mielestänne tyytyväisyyttä (Vaihtoehtokysymys)

Vaihtoehdot:

- 1. Täysin samaa mieltä
- 2. Osittain eri mieltä
- 3. Täysin eri mieltä

- 4. Osittain eri mieltä

- 5. En osaa sanoa

8. Henkilökohtainen kontakti palveluntarjoajaan lisää mielestänne tyytyväisyyttä

(Vaihtoehtokysymys)

Vaihtoehdot:

- 1. Täysin samaa mieltä

- 2. Osittain samaa mieltä

- 3. Täysin eri mieltä

- 4. Osittain eri mieltä

- 5. En osaa sanoa

9. Olette olleet tyytyväisiä asioidessanne Mediakanavan kanssa (Vaihtoehtokysymys)

Vaihtoehdot:

- 1. Täysin samaa mieltä

- 2. Osittain samaa mieltä

- 3. Täysin eri mieltä

- 4. Osittain eri mieltä

**Lisäostot:**

1. Palveluiden laatu vaikuttaa lisäostopäätökseenne (Vaihtoehtokysymys)

Valitse yksi tai useampi vaihtoehto

Vaihtoehdot:

- 1. Täysin samaa mieltä

- 2. Osittain samaa mieltä

- 3. Täysin eri mieltä

- 4. Osittain eri mieltä

- 5. En osaa sanoa

2. Tyytyväisyys koko ostoprosessiin vaikuttaa lisäostopäätökseenne (Vaihtoehtokysymys)

Vaihtoehdot:

- 1. Täysin samaa mieltä

- 2. Osittain samaa mieltä

- 3. Täysin eri mieltä

- 4. Osittain eri mieltä

- 5. En osaa sanoa

3. Palveluiden todellinen arvo teille vaikuttaa lisäostopäätökseenne (Vaihtoehtokysymys)

Vaihtoehdot:

- 1. Täysin samaa mieltä

- 2. Osittain samaa mieltä

- 3. Täysin eri mieltä

- 4. Osittain eri mieltä

- 5. En osaa sanoa

4. Aiemmat kokemukset Mediakanavan kanssa vaikuttavat lisäostopäätökseenne  
(Vaihtoehtokysymys)

Vaihtoehdot:

- 1. Täysin samaa mieltä
- 2. Osittain samaa mieltä
- 3. Täysin eri mieltä
- 4. Osittain eri mieltä
- 5. En osaa sanoa

5. Oikeudenmukainen kohtelu ostoprosessin aikana vaikuttaa lisäostopäätökseenne  
(Vaihtoehtokysymys)

Vaihtoehdot:

- 1. Erittäin paljon
- 2. Paljon
- 3. Jonkin verran
- 4. Ei lainkaan

6. Palveluntarjoajan vaihtamisesta koituvat kustannukset vaikuttavat lisäostopäätökseenne  
(Vaihtoehtokysymys)

Vaihtoehdot:

- 1. Erittäin paljon
- 2. Paljon
- 3. Jonkin verran
- 4. Ei lainkaan

7. Uskollisuus yrityksen tuotteille ja palveluille vaikuttavat lisäostopäätökseenne  
(Vaihtoehtokysymys)

Vaihtoehdot:

- 1. Erittäin paljon
- 2. Paljon
- 3. Jonkin verran
- 4. Ei lainkaan

8. Kuinka usein teette lisäostoja Mediakanavalta? (Vaihtoehtokysymys)

Vaihtoehdot:

- 1. Yhden kerran vuodessa
- 2. Useammin kuin kerran vuodessa